

SSN COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME

Regular activities

Visit to Roja Muthiah Library

July 2017

A crew of 40 budding volunteers of the National Service Scheme Club of Sri SivaSubramaniya Nadar College of Engineering, Kalavakkam visited the Roja Muthiah Research Library at Taramani on Saturday the 15th of July 2017 headed by Ms.P.Kaythry, the NSS Programme Officer, SSNCE.

The students left the campus @ 8.30 AM by college bus and reached the spot by 10.00 AM. Reaching there they were taken to a common hall where they were comfortably seated. The library was very quiet and calm and the students had no idea on what was going to happen. Then came Mr. G. Sundar, Director of RMRL and wished us all a very good morning.

With utmost silence he began his session with interesting and thought provoking interrogation. As the discussion progressed, he briefed the volunteers about the history of the library dating back to 1994 and about Mr.Roja Muthiah the man whose habit laid the foundation to this unique research library. This library was initially setup by the people from University of Chicago who wanted to protect and preserve “a collection of one lakh books” which Mr.Muthiah had saved his entire life individually. This was a fact to be known and appreciated. The crowd was amazed and became more interested to know stuff.

Currently the library has a voluminous collection of 4 lakh books in different languages with maximum books in Tamil. It provides research materials and facilities for students on Tamil studies in a variety of fields spanning the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. The center has holdings in classical and modern literature, literary criticism, medicine, cinema and the related culture of printed works (such as song books), folklore, material by and about women, religion and philosophy, and numerous publications of historical value. The collection is comprised of more than 100,000 volumes of books, journals, and newspapers, journal abstracts and indexes, an enormous collection of clippings, drama notices, wedding invitations, business and family correspondence, and palm leaf manuscripts.

The ultimate aim of RMRL is to:

1. Preserve,
2. Catalog
3. Expand the collection of Roja Muthiah
4. Collect all the books published in Tamil under one roof

The library has got an Indus research hub facilitating scholars of Harappan studies with materials and facilities. The basic motto of RMRL is preserving audio, visual, paper material through analog and digital technology for posterity.

The keystone achievements of the library were told to the volunteers of which few were:

1. Reproducing the original notes of the Indian legendary mathematician Ramanujam for his centenary birthday celebration.
2. Having a copy of the first ever printed books in Tamil.

After about an hour's explanation the team was taken around the library in order to have a better understanding of the working and process behind the preservatory process.

Firstly, the books are treated with a dilute base to neutralize the acidity in the pages of the book. Then it is dried and pressed against a transparent sheet and a special Japanese tissue. The whole book is then binded and kept in a vacuum chamber for cleansing.

Few more interesting techniques adopted are:

1. Microfilming the books
2. Scanning the pages with high resolution
3. Digitalizing the books through computer

The members follow every possible way to preserve a book and they are funded by private companies. After going around the various sections the amazed volunteers were again led to the hall and had a talk with the Director. He said that this visit was primarily aimed at creating awareness about preservation of history and oneness in the minds of the student community and to aid in the mammoth task in any possible way. The enthusiastic volunteers were served tea and Dinesh, a second year NSS volunteer thanked the library members for permitting the students to gain knowledge and know about the things happening around them in their social lives. Ms. P.Kaythry promised to turn up with all possible ways to lend a helping hand like

1. Donating rare collection of books
2. Raising fund
3. Volunteering in the process of preservation
4. Publicizing and creating awareness in this regard

The students felt thankful for elucidating the history of Tamil, book printing and most importantly the current mission to protect and preserve our proud past so as build a healthy and knowledgeable future. After such an experience gaining visit the excited crew of volunteers started back by 12.30 p.m. after clicking few pictures with the Director in front of the library. With satisfaction and happiness in the hearts the volunteers owed to hit back soon with exciting ideas and bubbling thoughts to this noble cause and do justification to their kind and future!